

# SECURITY SYSTEMS NEWS

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## Kastle Weathers Ike in Houston

*Experience validates 15-point continuity plan*

By L. Samuel Pfeifle, editor

HOUSTON—Riding out hurricane Ike? Quite simply, “it was scary,” said Ramona Brady, vice president and general manager of integrator Kastle Systems’ Houston office. “There was lots of booming and crashing going on, and the building across from us lost its entire back side, but we were very lucky. Because we’re UL-listed ... we’re in a pretty indestructible building. We didn’t have any physical damage to our building, and we didn’t have any physical damage to our people.”

Ten people rode out the storm in Kastle’s monitoring center, which covers roughly 500 commercial buildings in the Southwest, including 180 in Houston, alone. The good news is that Kastle has recently upgraded to technology that makes it hot redundant with its other two U.S.-based monitoring centers (Sydney, Australia, will be fully integrated shortly). So the company transferred all non-Houston alarm activity to its Washington, D.C., center, and then focused on Houston.

“We felt like we would have more current information here,” Brady said. Kastle locked down its buildings on Thursday as the storm loomed and people evacuated the city, then made the decision to keep them locked down as Monday arrived and Houston remained without power, only opening them as they reached building owners directly.

“We have call procedures that each building establishes and we follow those,” Brady said of how Kastle handled alarm activity. “But we’re able to change those on the fly.”

That Kastle was able to stay up and running is thanks to the company’s diligence in following its 15-point

business continuity plan, said company CTO Mohammad Soleimani. For example, while the company has uninterruptible power supply (known as UPS) like many companies, “we rigorously follow a weekly check procedure on all the generators and batteries,” he said. “We actually turn them on, make sure everything is in working order, cutting the street power. A lot of people just put the UPS in place and they assume everything is hunk-dory after that.”

Hence, the Kastle center was without power for nearly four full days and never lost continuity or had any downtime, said Brady.

Kastle feels this capability makes it somewhat unique in the market. “After 9-11, we started hearing more from our customer base about continuity,” Brady said, “but we had already started working on it.” She noted Kastle has had UPS capability for the 22 years she’s been at Kastle. “We need to be prepared,” Brady said, “because we’re monitoring things that people think are important.” **SSN**

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